



Health Care Reorganization: Important, if not Exciting

Sometimes, we in Topeka make decisions that are important, complex, and a bit difficult to understand. One such choice has surfaced with Executive Reorganization Order (ERO) #33, which would consolidate health care units in a single Division of the Department of Administration. The new Division of Health Policy and Finance provides the state with an administrative structure that can maximize our ability to provide affordable health care to the most Kansans.

This week my plan ran into a roadblock in the House Appropriations Committee, where Republicans voted to recommend disapproval in the full House.

I am dismayed and greatly concerned by this action. I simply do not understand how some legislators can oppose a plan that will streamline health care purchasing, thus producing: (a) more accountability; (b) increased efficiency; (c) greater state purchasing clout; (d) a slimmed-down Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services (health care out of agency); and (e) enhanced negotiating ability, both with the federal government and with health care providers.

This plan produces efficient, businesslike government, in which the single issue of health care receives the attention of a single department. More than 100 organizations support this reorganization; these include the Kansas Medical Society, the Kansas Hospital Association, the HealthyKansas Coalition, and many other provider and advocacy groups - all told, more than 100 organizations.

Given the federal budget cuts that are proposed for Medicaid, we in Kansas need the most efficient, most effective organization possible, both in administering our programs and in negotiating with Washington over funding decisions.

As governor, time and time again, I have made state government more efficient and responsive. This plan continues my work. I understand that partisanship is part of the game in Topeka, but party politics simply must not prevent us from improving how health care is organized within state government. I hope that legislators will understand this and endorse this most useful administrative change.